
Selecting a Doctoral Program in Communication Sciences and Disorders

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Although careful attention should be given to selecting a doctoral program, there is limited information on which to base such a decision. Forty-eight criteria are identified. These criteria should help in the decision-making process for selecting a doctoral program.

During the past 10 years, there has been a decline in the number of doctorates granted in communication sciences and disorders (Asha, 1991a). From 1985 to 1990, 460 doctoral degrees were granted, 61 less than the number that were granted between 1980–1985. The 1990–1991 National Survey of Graduate Programs in Communication Sciences and Disorders forecasts “a continuing demand for doctoral level graduates” (Council of Graduate Programs, 1991, p. 5). The number of doctoral students and the number of students who graduate with the doctorate tends to fluctuate (Cooper, Bernthal, & Creaghead, 1990–1991); nonetheless, it appears that both academic and nonacademic positions will continue to increase in number, requiring more doctoral level graduates to fill them.

According to the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA, 1995), there are 61 doctoral programs in communication sciences and disorders in the United States and Canada. In Canada, there are two doctoral programs: one in Montreal and the other in Vancouver. Of the 50 states, 19 do not have doctoral degree programs in communication disorders: Alaska, Arkansas, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Kentucky, Maine, Mississippi, Montana,

New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming. The states with the largest number of doctoral programs are: New York (6), Ohio (6), Florida (3), Illinois (3), Massachusetts (3), Michigan (3), Pennsylvania (3), Tennessee (3), and Texas (3). The fewest number of doctoral programs are in the western states, and the largest number are in the eastern states (ASHA, 1995).

Although Ludlow (1986) pointed out that “particular care” must be taken in selecting a doctoral program, there is no available information regarding the selection of a doctoral program in speech-language pathology or audiology. However, limited information exists concerning the selection criteria used by master’s level students in speech-language pathology (Condon, 1983; Rockwood & Madison, 1992–1993). Many of Hooper’s (1992–1993) questions and observations for students applying to masters’ programs could be useful in selecting a doctoral program. Additionally, Siegel (1992) described the essential academic, clinical, and research characteristics of a quality master’s program.

Although the master’s degree is generally recognized as the foundation of knowledge and skills requisite for clinical practice, the doctoral degree is typically considered the foundation for research and teaching (Cooper, 1986; Hixon, 1992; Ludlow, 1986; Malinoff & Spivak, 1991). According to Saxman (1991) “the Ph.D. degree is a scholarly degree with clinical aspects assuming a position of secondary importance to research” (p. 35). Shewan (1988) indicated that more researchers are needed in the speech-language-hearing profession than are currently available, and the number of researchers needed is predicted to grow with time. In the year 2000, there will be a need for 2,016 researchers.

Table 1. Factors used in selecting a doctoral program in communication sciences and disorders.

<i>Factor</i>	<i>References</i>	<i>Factor</i>	<i>References</i>
Facility:		Clinic facilities	Condon (1983)
Reputation of university	Condon (1983)	Supervisory staff	ASHA (1992)
Geographic location	Barron (1990) Condon (1983) Boyer & Savageau (1989) Fiske (1988) Nemko (1988)	Faculty:	
Support services—Library computers	Barron (1990) Condon (1983) Findley & DeLisa (1990)	Average level of training of faculty	Condon (1983)
Nearness to home	Condon (1983)	Professional reputation of faculty	Condon (1983) Sternberg (1981)
Size of university	Nemko (1988)	Faculty-student ratio	Barron (1990) Condon (1983) Cooper (1986) Gabor (1990) McLaughlin (1981) Punch & Fein (1984)
History of the school	Condon (1983) Chamings et al. (1990)	Percentage of faculty holding doctorates	Barron (1990) Chamings et al. (1990) Condon (1983) Gabor (1990) Nemko (1988)
Maintenance	Barron (1990)	Professional productivity including publications and grants received	Adams et al. (1984) Findley & DeLisa (1990) Gourman (1989) Holzemer (1987) Ludlow (1986) Ratusnik, Klon, & Milianti (1979)
Safety	Gest & Wagner (1991)	Academic rank and salary level	Barron (1990) Holzemer (1987) Ludlow (1986) Morse (1990)
Financial:		Full-time faculty	Barron (1990) Holzemer (1987) Punch & Fein (1984)
Cost	Barron (1990) Condon (1983)	Number of tenured faculty	Holzemer (1987)
Support	ASHA (1992) Barron (1990) Condon (1983) Gabor (1990) Punch & Fein (1984)	Years since receiving highest degree	Holzemer (1987)
Qualifications for instate tuition	Condon (1983)	Years in program	Holzemer (1987)
Residency required	ASHA (1992)	Cohesiveness	Adams et al. (1984)
Academics:		Professionalism	Adams et al. (1984)
Academic reputation	Condon (1983) Gabor (1990) Nemko (1988)	Students:	
Number of different courses offered	Condon (1983) Nemko (1988)	Drop out rate	Foote (1991)
Duration of program	ASHA (1992) Condon (1983) Cooper (1986)	Number of students in program	Condon (1983) Cooper (1986) Gabor (1990)
Credit hour requirement	Condon (1983)	Student satisfaction	Holzemer (1987)
Class size	Barron (1990)	Number of ABDs	Sternberg (1981)
Different master's and doctoral level courses	Ludlow (1986)	National examination pass rate	Lingwall (1987)
Strength of related programs (statistics, computer science, anatomy, linguistics)	Ludlow (1986)	Alumni:	
Opportunity for research	Condon (1983) Findley & DeLisa (1990)	Percent of alumni employed as audiologists or speech-language pathologists	Condon (1983)
Admission requirements	Barron (1990) Condon (1983)	Number of alumni holding ASHA's Certification of Clinical Competence	Condon (1983)
Selectivity (number of students rejected)	Condon (1983) Gabor (1990) Punch & Fein (1984)	Professional achievements of alumni	Barron (1990) Chamings et al. (1990)
Accreditation	Barron (1990) Bianchi (1990)	Number of alumni	Cooper (1986)
Estimated time to complete program	Davis & Parker (1979)		
Clinic:			
Clientele	ASHA (1992)		

A doctoral program should be selected on the basis of an objective analysis of numerous factors. Some of these factors, such as research, are unique to the doctoral degree. These factors, which were derived from the literature, are listed in Table 1. There are individual differences in the importance of these factors. For example, women entering or returning to doctoral programs may be more interested in nontraditional options such as child care facilities, accelerated courses, flexible class scheduling, and evening or weekend courses (Fagan & Williams, 1991). Such concerns are important because more than 20 percent of students enrolled in graduate programs between 1990 and 1991 were nontraditional older students (Council of Graduate Programs, 1991).

An on-site visit is valuable in selecting a doctoral program. A visit to a place where you may spend considerable time is highly recommended. Students currently enrolled in a doctoral program are excellent sources of information. It is advisable to obtain a list of current doctoral students in a given program and to talk to as many as possible. Lanks (1990) suggested that if the opinions of these students differ from those of designated student representatives, then ignore the latter. Hooper (1992-1993) believed that it is valuable to speak to a student like oneself in age, gender, and life-style. If there is no one like you in the program, find out why. Those students who have completed all but their dissertation (ABDs), alumni, faculty, friends, and relatives are additional sources of information (Condon, 1983; Miller, 1990). Moreover, opinions vary on the value of staying at one university for both undergraduate and graduate work. Some consider it wiser to study for each degree at a different school in order to have exposure to different points of view (Bianchi, 1990).

For prospective doctoral students wishing to make an informed choice, it may be helpful to consult a guide to graduate programs. *The Gourman Report* (Gourman, 1989) is a guide that provides numerical scores for strengths and weaknesses of graduate schools and programs. Hixon (1992) believes that quality doctoral programs are located at universities listed in Carnegie Classification Research I Universities. There are 31 such institutions with programs in communication sciences and disorders—23 on public campuses and eight on private campuses (Carnegie Foundation, 1987). These universities are listed in the Appendix. ASHA's (1992) *Guide to Graduate Education in Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology 1991-1992* provides descriptions of master's degree programs accredited by the Educational Standards Board of ASHA. Most doctoral level programs are in universities that also offer the master's degree in audiology, speech-language pathology, or both. The program descriptions include the year when graduate degrees were first granted, number of faculty holding ASHA's Certificate of Clinical Competence, research areas, unique aspects of the program, number of degrees granted during the last 5 years, and number of full-time students. Another source of information concerning doctoral programs is ASHA's Research Information Service (1991b), which has a computerized database. Information includes average time from entry to graduation as well as support services and resources.

Making these criteria explicit should help students find the appropriate doctoral program. Although this report has offered preliminary insights into selection criteria, further information regarding doctoral education in audiology and speech-language pathology, such as qualitative assessment, is needed (Chamings, Parrish, & Hargett, 1990; Holzemer, 1987). Qualitative assessment includes information concerning program purposes, faculty training and achievements, student ability and performance, resources, academic and social environments of the program, and alumni achievements.

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APPENDIX.

Research I and II universities with doctoral programs in communication sciences and disorders (Carnegie Foundation, 1987).

Research Universities I

University of Arizona
Boston University*
Case Western Reserve University*
University of Cincinnati
University of Colorado
Columbia University*
University of Connecticut
University of Florida
Howard University
University of Illinois
Indiana University
University of Iowa
Louisiana State University at Baton Rouge
University of Maryland at College Park
Michigan State University
University of Minnesota
University of Missouri at Columbia
New York University*
Northwestern University*
Ohio State University
Pennsylvania State University
University of Pittsburgh
Purdue University
University of Tennessee
University of Texas at Austin
University of Utah
Vanderbilt University*
University of Virginia
University of Washington
Washington University at St. Louis
University of Wisconsin at Madison

Research Universities II

University of California at Santa Barbara
Florida State University
Southern Illinois University
University of Kansas
University of Massachusetts
University of Nebraska at Lincoln
State University of New York at Buffalo
University of Oklahoma
University of South Carolina
Syracuse University*
Temple University
Utah State University
Wayne State University

* private institution

I = High priority to research; annually receive at least \$33.5 million in federal support, award at least 50 PhD degrees annually.

II = High priority to research; annually receive \$2.5 to 33.5 million in federal support for research and development; award at least 50 PhD degrees each year.